

TESTIMONY TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION
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STATE OF MISSOURI
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Good morning, my name is Mike Wells. I am Deputy Director for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Chief of Water Resources for the State of Missouri. As Chief of Water Resources, I represent Governor Matt Blunt on interstate water issues. Thank you for providing this opportunity to present testimony.

At your last meeting in April, I reiterated to you the importance of a reliable river channel to support waterborne commerce. I reported to you that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) had failed to meet the minimum service navigation target flows at Kansas City of 35,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) for the first four days of the navigation season this year. This problem has not been resolved as the Corps continues to miss navigation targets on the Missouri River causing critical interruptions in navigation. Missing navigation targets on Missouri River not only negatively impacts commerce on the Missouri River, but also impacts the Mississippi River.

During July and early August, the Corps failed to provide a minimum navigation channel of 8 feet deep by 200 feet wide. The Corps missed minimum service navigation flow targets at Kansas City for ten days in July and three days so far in August. Due to the inadequate releases from upstream reservoirs and poorly maintained navigation structures, navigators on the Missouri River began experiencing problems as early as the first week in July. By July 20, the U.S. Coast Guard had issued a safety advisory restricting drafts to less than 7 feet. For all practical purposes, this action closed the Missouri River to commercial navigation for over two weeks. Shipments of agricultural products and construction materials were delayed for weeks due to the mismanagement of the Missouri River. Magnolia Marine, which transports asphalt from Wood River, Illinois to Kansas City, left the river on July 3 and has yet to return because the company's towboats were damaged by dragging on the bottom of the river channel. Contractors have had to rely on additional trucks to transport the asphalt to Kansas City, which has significantly increased the costs of construction.

This year, for the fourth year in a row, the Corps will shorten the navigation season on the Missouri River to conserve water in the upstream reservoirs. The Corps has compounded the problem of a shorter navigation season by failing to provide a reliable navigation channel during a time when the river should be open to

navigation. Statements to the media by the Corps would lead the public to the false believe that the problem of an inadequate navigation channel is due to the drought. In reality, the Missouri River Reservoir System was put in place by the federal government to provide additional water in times of water shortages in the lower river. For an industry that has been struggling to survive with minimum navigation service and shortened seasons for four years, the Corps' inability to provide an uninterrupted navigation season is totally unacceptable.

In 2004, the Corps revised the Missouri River Master Manual, shifting water away from navigation support and towards upstream reservoirs. Under the 1979 Missouri River Master Manual, the Corps would have shortened the navigation season by one week. Under the new Master Manual, the Corps is shortening the navigation season by 44 days. Given this change, the very least the Corps can do is provide a reliable Missouri River navigation channel throughout the shortened navigation season.

One of the problems this year was that the Corps did not have a plan in place to deal with low water conditions on the lower Missouri River. When navigation support to the Missouri River is stopped in mid-October of this year, Mississippi River stages will drop by up to two to three feet. If low water conditions persist on the Mississippi River into October, there is strong likelihood that navigation could be halted on the Mississippi River this fall. If the Corps has a plan to deal with this scenario, it should be shared with the public. If there is no such plan, then I ask that the Corps develop one immediately.

The Missouri and Mississippi Rivers must be managed as part of the larger Inland Waterway System. The State of Missouri looks forward to working with the Corps and the Commission to manage these great rivers as one system. Again, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. At this time, I would be glad to answer any questions.